

# The Secret

What Great Leaders  
Know and Do

THIRD EDITION

Ken Blanchard  
Mark Miller



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.  
San Francisco  
*a BK Business book*

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**Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.**

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 650  
San Francisco, CA 94104-2916

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Printed in the United States of America

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**Production Management:** Michael Bass Associates  
**Cover Design:** Irene Morris

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Third Edition

19 18 17 16 15 14

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*This book is dedicated to  
the next generation of  
serving leaders.*

# Contents

Foreword by John Maxwell vii

The Opportunity 1

The Meeting 9

The Secret 21

A Different Approach 31

Where Are You Going? 34

What's Most Important? 44

An Engaging Conversation 49

An Insight with Impact 63

How Can It Be Better? 72

What Is Success? 79

How's Your Credibility? 89

Serving Leaders 102

Let's Review 107

Passing the Baton 115

## Resources

Debbie's Secret Notes 119

Self-Assessment: Are You a Serving Leader? 124

Frequently Asked Questions 128

Acknowledgments 134

About the Authors 136

Services Available 139

# Foreword

Everything rises and falls on leadership! That's why I've been a student, a practitioner, and an advocate of leadership for more than thirty years. That's also why I'm excited to introduce this third edition of *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*. Since its initial publication in 2004, this book has been translated into over twenty languages and has sold a half million copies around the globe. Clearly, the book has struck a chord in a world hungry for effective ideas on this important subject.

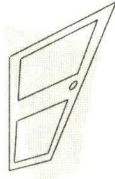
I'm not surprised that *The Secret* became a best seller. In fact, when I learned that Ken and Mark were collaborating on this project, I knew it would be a winner. Here's why:

Ken has been thinking and writing about leadership for four decades. Just look at this list of titles: *The One Minute Manager*<sup>®</sup>, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, *Gung Ho!*, *Leading at a Higher Level*, *Raving Fans*, and *Whale Done!* The list could go on and on, and I'm sure you've heard of many of these books (I hope you've read some of them as well). Ken has sold more than twenty million books—and counting. He is one of very few authors in history to have four titles on the *Business Week* best-seller list at one time. Ken has helped to shape the way our generation leads.

Mark has taken a different path. For more than thirty-five years, he has been part of the leadership team at one of America's great organizations—Chick-fil-A, Inc., based in Atlanta, Georgia. Chick-fil-A is a quick-service restaurant company with more than 1,700 locations and sales over \$5 billion annually. Currently, Mark serves as vice president for organizational effectiveness. I've had the privilege of speaking at the company's annual meeting on two occasions, and these people get it! *The Secret* is no secret in this organization. It is at the heart of their success.

My challenge to you is simple: learn *The Secret*—then apply *The Secret*. If you do, your leadership and your life will be transformed forever.

—John C. Maxwell  
Best-selling author, speaker,  
and leadership expert



## The Opportunity

*How can leadership be this hard? One year ago today was the happiest day of my life. I had arrived! Only four years out of college, and my company had moved me into a leadership position: director of corporate client services for the southeast sales region. I knew I could handle the job, because I'd started from our catalog call center, fielding customer requests and complaints. Then I was promoted to a project manager, working closely with sales and our corporate clients. Whatever the salespeople promised our customers, I delivered. And if I do say so myself, I was good at getting our corporate clients what they needed, when and where they needed it. I got all kinds of kudos for developing outstanding relationships with clients. I was sure I could make my staff do the same.*

*A year ago, I was on top of the world. Today, I'm holding on for dear life and might lose my job. What happened? What went wrong?*

With those thoughts, Debbie Brewster pulled into the parking lot at the public library. She knew she could never have an uninterrupted day in the office. Besides, her boss had always encouraged her to take some time every month to step back and Assess what had happened, Affirm what was working,

and make Adjustments as needed. She had always been too busy to actually try it, but today was different. Drastic times demand drastic measures.

As Debbie entered the library, her mind flashed back to long-forgotten memories from her less-than-stellar educational career. The musty smell of the old volumes was as strong as ever. The lighting was about the same—a bit too dark. That had never made much sense to her. *Why aren't libraries better lit?*

Debbie approached the librarian and said, “Hi, I’m looking for a place to work. Somewhere with ample light, if that’s possible.”

“Certainly,” the woman said with a smile. “Are there any particular resources you’ll need today?”

“No, but thanks anyway. I just need a quiet place to work for a few hours. I have a few business issues that I need to resolve.”

“Let me know if you need any help,” the librarian offered. She escorted Debbie to a table in a quiet corner with two large windows on each side.

Debbie took a seat, pulled out her laptop and began. *First, I need to get a firm grip on my current situation. Then I’ll try to determine how I got into this mess.*

### Current Situation

Feedback from salespeople	Worst among all 7 sales regions
Customer satisfaction	Worst among all 7 sales regions
Profit contribution	Below goal



Cost management	At goal
Employee satisfaction	Significantly below where it was when I took over the team.
Turnover	I've lost 4 out of 10 team members in less than a year. This feels like an issue.

*Okay, that's where we are today. How did things get so bad, so fast?* She thought back over the previous twelve months. Which events might have contributed to her team's current lackluster performance?

### Key Events

June 1	I am appointed as team leader.
June 15	First team meeting; conflict over changes I wanted the team to implement.
July	Selected Bob—new to the company—poor decision.
August	Cut expenses to improve profitability.
September	Two new hires: Brenda—good fit; Charles—wait and see.
October	Lost one important client due to poor service from our people.
November	Bob terminated. Team seems very disengaged.

December	Year-end results reflect significant drop in team performance versus previous year.
January	Performance reviews with each member of the team. Every team member is challenged to “step up or step out.”
February	Lost two more clients—same reason as before.
May	Team meetings canceled until further notice. Focus on improving results.

*Wow! No wonder it was a bad year. Look at all the stuff that happened. Unfortunately, I don't think “stuff just happened” is the insight I need to turn things around.*

Debbie's somber thought was interrupted by the librarian. “How's your work going? Getting everything done?”

“Not exactly. I've reviewed the current situation, but I don't know where to go from here,” Debbie admitted.

“Maybe I can help,” the librarian said.

Debbie was amused by the comment but tried not to show it. “Well, thank you, but I'm not sure you could. It's a complex problem.”

“Oh, I didn't mean that I could personally help you solve your problem,” the woman responded

patiently. “However, we do have quite a few resources about business at our disposal. What is the problem you’re trying to solve?”

“In our company, we often refer to problems as opportunities,” Debbie explained.

“Okay, what’s the opportunity?” the woman said with a smile as she continued to probe.

“I think I could sum it up by saying that I have an opportunity to improve the performance of my team.”

“Do you know what’s causing the performance issues?”

Debbie paused. “I’m not sure. I listed all the key events from the last year and several things that could have contributed, but—”

“But what?” the woman asked.

“I get this sinking feeling that I may be a significant part of the problem. I’ve only been the team leader for about a year, and I have no prior training or experience.” Debbie thought, *I can’t believe I’m baring my soul to the librarian.*

“We’ve got quite a few resources on leadership development,” the librarian offered.

“Leadership development,” Debbie repeated.

“Yes,” said the librarian, “you said you might be part of the problem.”

“I think I said I might be a contributing factor, but the real issue is performance.” Debbie could feel herself getting defensive. It was one thing to admit she might be part of the problem. It had a different ring to it when she heard someone else say it.

The librarian stepped back. "Okay, I'll leave you alone to work on it yourself."

As the woman walked away, Debbie reconsidered. *Maybe there are some new leadership tricks I can learn.* What could she lose at this point? Only her job and her dream. "Wait!" she called out. "I'm sorry. I was a bit defensive. I've been under a lot of pressure."

The woman turned back with an understanding smile. "It's okay."

"Where are those resources that you mentioned?" Debbie asked, relieved that the librarian was still willing to help.

"Follow me." The librarian led Debbie to a nearby computer, and together they scrolled through the listings, which included titles such as these:

- *The Power of 360-Degree Feedback*
- *Development Plans That Work*
- *Leaders Mentoring Leaders*
- *What Do Leaders Do?*

Debbie began to see something as they scrolled from screen to screen. The word *mentoring* was repeated several times; in fact, it was repeated on almost every screen she viewed. Then it hit her!

"Excuse me," she said.

She went back to her laptop and opened her e-mail. She was sure she had seen a message that had something to do with mentoring. It read:

Send to: All Supervisors and Managers  
From: Melissa Arnold  
Subject: Mentoring Opportunities  
Date: May 23

As outlined in our annual plan, we indicated that assisting the current and next generation of leaders would be one of our top priorities for this year and for years to come. We believe that one way we can assist our emerging leaders is to establish a formal mentoring program within the organization. We want to be very clear that this program is optional. Any of you who wish to participate need to submit an application to me before June 1.

If you would like additional information about the program, there will be a "Lunch and Learn" on Friday, May 28, in the fourth floor conference room from 12:15 until 1 P.M. Bring your own lunch.

*This could be the ticket, Debbie thought. I'm sure a mentor from within the company would help solve the issues in my area. My mentor will probably be able to diagnose the problem and tell me how to fix it in a meeting or two. Besides, it might even look good in my personnel file to say that I was mentored by an executive.*

*An alarm went off in Debbie's mind: Today is the 28th! I've missed the informational meeting. But if I leave now, I can go by the office and pick up one of those applications, fill it out this weekend, and submit it Monday morning before the deadline.*

Debbie gathered her things and headed for the library exit. "Thanks for your help," she called to the librarian on her way out.

"Any time," the woman replied with a smile.  
"Good luck!"